

МАТЕРИАЛЫ КОНФЕРЕНЦИИ

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DISABILITY — ABILITY — EXTRABILITY: EXTRABILITY AS A PHENOMENON OF AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE

People are used to look to the negative side, on the defects. Disability has a negative connotation which should be avoided or cured. On the opposite to endure physical or psychological limitations and barriers, one must develop new capacities. By creating these new abilities persons with disabilities can even achieve enhanced abilities — extrabilities. Worldwide Congresses for Persons with Disabilities are impressing best practices to transform disabilities into extrabilities and to make them visible to society.

Keywords: extrability, inclusive interaction, people with disabilities, social projects.

I am working for 25 years with persons with disabilities in different regions of the world. I met thousands of them at all ages, but also family members, professionals and individuals who are engaged in the disability field.

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The appearance of a disability has a fundamental impact on the person itself and its social realm. It always is a grave and even a traumatic incident in the biography of a person and its family. Until today disability has a negative connotation and should be avoided or cured. New techniques like prenatal diagnostics but also philosophical concepts and cultural heritages are some of the reasons therefore. The number of abortions worldwide is rising [1] which includes also children who would have been born with a disability. Even today people are still marginalised by their social environment because of their special life situation. Discriminations are happening in different ways.

To endure physical or psychological limitations and barriers, one must develop inner capacities. I have met hundreds of people who are amazingly healthy and powerful despite their disability. Sometimes they even have spiritual powers that I have found nowhere else. Many of them are optimistic and positive and very aware of their situation. Overcoming barriers and obstacles makes you stronger and generates positive energies.

My observations brought me to the thought that disabilities are useful to create new abilities and skills. A lack or loss of a capacity leads towards an ability as a counterbalance. This is obvious when we look at the individual level. The phenomena of disability also have a great influence on the social environment. How many families had to change completely due to the birth of a handicapped child? If the change was positive the relationships deepened and improved very often. I spoke with hundreds of parents, a lot of them with very severe disabled children. I was pretty astonished to notice that none of them would have chosen another destiny. All of them had to struggle a lot with the problems and pain. But in the end, they experienced so many positive changes that they did not want to avoid them. Mostly mothers told me that the situation helped them to become a better person, to find answers to burning questions and what makes a life more meaningful. These statements I heard of course also from persons with disabilities themselves.

The notion of compensatory skills can even reach a next step in the development of human beings. If persons or social settings are not only

compensating handicaps but consciously trying to reach even a higher level in any development we might even speak of an enhanced ability — an extrability [2]. The concept of extrabilities means that not only abilities but even talents are showing up. They are so individual, unique and incomparable and because of them artists are admired. If a person not only compensates his handicap but consciously uses it and tries to help others, this is for me the highest level, the extrability. I have met individuals who are able to change not only themselves but others as well.

We are very used to look always on the negative side, on the defects. In Russia we even create the profession of a “Defektolog”. What we urgently need is to focus on the positive side which exists as well. We need scientific researches about abilities and extrabilities to prove that disability can lead towards mutual benefits for the person itself but also for all others involved. Extrabilities can be generated by deep suffering. The suffering can, however, be regarded as ferment for the improvement of human relations. In that sense disabilities can change the world to a better. Persons are no longer neglected and marginalised by their disabilities, but recognised by their abilities. It would be a good practice of inclusion to recognise them as leaders in serving humanity.

Innovation in social sphere: socialartist events — Worldwide Congresses for Persons with Disabilities.

In 1997 persons with disabilities were often not included in the discussions and decision makings referring their life topic. Mostly it was spoken about but not with them. The idea came up to organize congresses to bring the target group itself in the focus. Since the first Congress for Persons with Disabilities was held 1998 in Berlin with 500 participants an impressive worldwide movement started. Within twenty years I initiated 30 events. 7 Congresses with always up to 700 participants were held throughout Europe but also several in Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Uruguay, Serbia, Georgia, Armenia, Tajikistan, Thailand, India and Russia. 2010 in Moscow, two years later in Yekaterinburg and 2018 in Sevastopol. The most impressive congress ever was realised in Yekaterinburg in 2017. This First World

Congress gathered more than 700 participants from all continents living with diverse disabilities [3].

Attending these events, the target group has the opportunity to travel and meet others in similar situations to exchange experiences, make friends and get empowered. The congress programs always focus on the abilities. Countless extrabilities could be brought to light in this way. The worldwide congresses are important tools to help to develop individual potentials, to overcome borders and limitations and to transform disabilities into extrabilities.

References

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